

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



For Immediate Release – December 3, 2015

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New York State Department of Transportation Capital Program Process Opaque and Unregulated; Public Input and Legislative Oversight Needed

As the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Transportation holds a hearing today to discuss the New York State Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT) Two Year Capital Program, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign urges the Committee to call for improved transparency and oversight into the Capital Program process.

For the past several years, members of the New York State Assembly and Senate and the general public have requested, in advance of budget discussions, the list of statewide transportation projects to be undertaken by NYSDOT. Yet, the list of projects often does not materialize until after the budget is finalized. This year, a two-year list of projects became available on September 25, 2015—nearly six months after the state budget was approved.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the governor and legislature has often

accompanied the list of upcoming transportation projects and included important directives and reporting requirements. For instance, the MOU for the 2013-2014 NYS budget directed NYSDOT to submit a five-year capital plan for the 2015-2016 budget cycle. Not only has a five-year Capital Program not been released, neither has the MOU from last year's budget.

MOUs are a poor substitute for statutory requirements. Unlike the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), NYSDOT is not required by statute to submit a five-year Capital Plan.

This opaque and unregulated process must change. The state legislature must require NYSDOT to submit a five-year Capital Plan, with defined projects, that is subject to public review prior to passage of the state budget and require NYSDOT to report on the progress of the Plan.

Today, we urge the Assembly Committee on Transportation to call for this change. The public and those we elect into office should know how our taxpayer dollars are being invested in our transportation network.

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The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.